

*171 327 North Vietnam*  
*Richard B. Russell*

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## If an Excuse Is Needed

An unexpected—and largely unobserved,—handle has been offered President Johnson if he should choose to make an end of the bombing of North Vietnam.

The Central Intelligence Agency has been looking into the effectiveness of the bombing raids, and last week Sen. Richard B. Russell (D-Ga.) shed a little inadvertent light on the results. He said that the still-classified reports indicated that much of the bombing was "wholly ineffective" and that the bombings were the "most expensive" this country ever conducted.

The President has other sources than the

CIA to check out on the net serviceability of the bombings. His must also be the decision as to whether the potential gains for the enemy in a bombing halt would put the proposition beyond any serious consideration.

But the CIA message comes at a psychologically interesting time, with more Americans than ever calling more stridently than ever for the United States to extend this unilateral olive twig to Hanoi. It could add up to an opportunity the President, with so much to gain through progress toward a settlement, would find irresistible.